

## Lee Vining, FERC Project No. 1388

### RECREATION AND LAND USE TWG 1 MEETING NOTES

January 28, 2021; 10 AM - 12 PM PDT

*\*These meeting notes are documentation of general discussions from the meeting held on the above-noted date. These notes are not a verbatim account of proceedings, are not meeting minutes, and do not represent any final decisions or official documentation for the project or participating agencies.*

#### 1. Attendees

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##### Relicensing Team Members

Carissa Shoemaker, ERM  
Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt  
Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt  
Matthew Harper, Kleinschmidt  
Matthew Woodhall, SCE  
Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt

##### Agencies and Interested Stakeholders

Adam Barnett, USFS  
Bartshe Miller, Mono Lake Committee (MLC)  
Christina McDonald, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California  
Katie Goodwin, Access Fund  
Lawson Reif, USFS  
Nick Buckmaster, CDFW  
Nora Gamino, USFS  
Ron Goode, North Fork Mono Tribe  
Sheila Irons, USFS  
Stephen Bowes, NPS

#### 2. Compiled Action Items

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- The relicensing team will put the current license and other relevant amendments up on the project website for reference <https://www.sce.com/regulatory/hydro-licensing/leevining>
- Relicensing team can direct you to USFS trail data.
- Follow up with cultural team on how historic and who developed the trails within the Project area.
- Access Fund (Katie Goodwin) can provide information on how people are accessing the ice climbing areas in the project vicinity, she will research and get back to us.
- Relicensing team can provide the current project boundary to everyone.
- Relicensing team will capture the concern of impacts from recreation on archaeological, cultural, and tribal sites. We will find the right place to address this.
- The Relicensing Team will distribute a link to the Bishop Creek Study Plan and an updated study plan template for TWG members to fill out within 2 weeks of receipt.

#### 3. Welcome and Introductions

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- Matthew Woodhall provided a Safety moment
- Introductions of team and all participants
- Review of notes/comments from November – good to be finalized and posted to website

#### 4. Relicensing Process

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- The Relicensing Team provided a FERC relicensing overview

#### 5. Discussion of Resource Management Objectives / Potential Study Requests

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- What issues would you like us to focus on?
- Comment: USFS – We are focused on developed recreation sites to bring them up to current standards for accessibility, sustainability, and resource protection. What is the project boundary? Seems like many recreation sites are outside of the project boundary but do exist because they are associated with the project.
  - Relicensing Team – It's sort of a fine art of determining which recreation sites are there because of the Project or just because it's a beautiful location.
  - Relicensing Team – According to FERC, a project-induced site is one that has been included in the license for mitigation and is considered project-required. These creeks were there prior, so the draw for recreation could have been there prior to the project. No developed recreation sites are associated with the current license. However, minimum flows and fish stocking are included in the license. It would be reasonable to consider that some of the recreation here is project-induced.
- Comment: NPS – It would be useful straight out of the gate, what sites do we all feel are project-related and should be included in potential future studies. Should be a top priority, not decided today but is essential.
  - Relicensing Team – A similar conversation/process happened with Bishop Creek, and we do have a similar thought process going here with Lee Vining. The lakes were dammed up and created by the Project.
  - SCE – These evaluations have occurred in the past to develop the current license. Those before us made some decisions on what recreation sites would be included in the license. We do have fish stocking included but no recreation facilities currently in the license. Because this area is also the entrance to Yosemite NP this area would be used that way regardless even if the Project wasn't here. If you can provide significant nexus to the Project we can analyze it accordingly.
- Comment: USFS – Where can we find the document showing that recreation sites were deemed not associated with the Project?
  - Relicensing Team – We can reference you back to the 90s licensing documents, previous assessments, EA, etc. However, times change and part of what we are doing is updating the license with current environmental standards, so it may be a question we pursue. We can put current license up on the website for reference. In our notes we can cross reference where to find the license and this information.
- Comment: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California - Is there a trail inventory within the FERC boundary? I'm just thinking of any trail impacts in areas of sensitive species locations. Designated trails and undesignated.
  - Relicensing Team – We would be developing that list. The dashed lines on this map show trails within the vicinity. Though this map is not entirely exhaustive. There are

about 8 trailheads on this figure that lead off project into the wilderness. Some do cross into the project boundary. None are specifically tied to the license. There is lots of fishing along Lee Vining Creek; informal foot trails are present for fishing access.

- Relicensing Team – Trails impacts' on sensitive species was mentioned yesterday in the Terrestrial TWG. We will be analyzing potential indirect effects of the recreation and project on these sensitive species. It is sort of an interpretive question about why that trail exists, but we will figure out a way to assess those access point and see how they intersect with our resource questions.
- North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California - I missed that conversation yesterday, sounds like it will be addressed. Thank you. Perhaps a GIS layer showing trails and species polygons would be good to see.
- Relicensing Team – It should be noted that we will be working on sharing information between the TWGs so you all know what has been discussed at the other TWGs.
- The PAD will assess sensitive species in the area in light of where the current trails are, dispersed foot trails won't necessarily be mapped though. We could point you to that data from the USFS, if you'd like. [USFS trail data can be accessed here.](#)
- Comment: North Fork Mono Tribe – I was invited to the Cultural-Tribal TWG but I was not available to attend. Are these recreation trails, forest service made, rancher made, Native American made? How historic are these trails?
  - Relicensing Team - I don't think we know this at the moment, but our cultural team might. We will follow up with them and get back to you.
- Comment: MLC – I'm interested in the opportunities regarding the pullouts: one right at Ellery Lake and one at Tioga overlook. Are those in the project area? Are there opportunities to organize/clarify traffic there, manage people, and include interpretive displays since the pullouts attract people to observe the scenery? What about adding restrooms?
  - Relicensing Team – Some or all of the pullouts are within the project boundary, but none are managed by SCE. We will take a look at the use around the reservoirs. We will look at existing use and needs associated with the project. In the study, interviews, spot counters, trail counters would be used. There are currently no restrooms to go to. We will work these issues into our PAD discussion.
- Comment: CDFW – The project creates reservoirs, our department needs to stock those to maintain the value of them to fishermen, and the stocking plan is based on use data. We will ask for a study to quantify fishing pressure on reservoirs to inform mitigation measures for stocking.
  - Relicensing Team – Are you thinking of something like the Bishop studies?
  - CDFW – Yes, like a good creel survey. We have no idea how many fishermen are using the lakes other than a qualitative guess. To capture the target species, catch rates would be the intent. The study title would be "Recreational Fishing Assessment".
  - Relicensing Team – Would it only include the reservoirs or creeks as well?
  - CDFW – It would be reservoirs mainly, with a cursory creek survey too. We need more data. Most fishermen are probably targeting the lakes except for around campgrounds where people follow the stocking truck.

- Comment: Access Fund – I need a better look at the project boundary line. There is a substantial amount of ice climbing that happens below Ellery Lake. Where are the flows coming from and will they change? What fact finding do I need to do to figure out what's happening there?
  - Relicensing Team – I looked to find directions to these sites but couldn't find them while developing the draft PAD. Can you share that information?
  - Access Fund – Yes, I can provide how people are getting in there. Travel would be over snow, not on trails, resulting in less impacts on vegetation and soil. I would be happy to provide this information. It's a unique area for ice climbing.
  - Relicensing Team – Does the USFS track climbing access use, etc.? The boundary does not extend down into the canyon below Rhinedollar Dam. So what would be nexus to the project be for this. How could the project impact this – flows?
  - USFS – The Inyo National Forest does not track climbing use in the area.
  - Access Fund – I will do some research and outreach and get back to everyone.
  - SCE – Recognize that the penstock is within the red line on the map, water is within the penstock there, there is no open flow of water in that area. Ice climbing is down within the face, I think the ice climbing is north of the penstock outside of the project boundary.
  - Access Fund – I assumed that was the case too. Just wanted to flag that there is climbing in the area. It may not have anything to do with the project.
  - Relicensing Team – I can provide the current project boundary to everyone if that would be useful. In the PAD we discuss how lots of the trail access points are near the Poole Powerhouse for access of these ice climbing sites.
- Comment: North Fork Mono Tribe - Where will you be addressing Cultural Resources, archaeological sites either via trails or your operation?
  - Relicensing Team - We do have a Cultural Resources TWG. We will also be making sure that there is communication between the study leads. Audry Williams, Shelly Davis-King, and Lyn Compas (Cultural-Tribal TWG Leads) are aware of what is happening within the other TWGs. For the purposes of our notes, we will capture the concern of impacts from recreation on archaeological, cultural, and tribal sites. We will find the right place to address this.
- Comment: USFS – The County has an easement on the road to the Poole Powerhouse, they plow it in the winter. It's a native surface road. As far as the penstock, climbers were going up there and trying to ice farm [create a new area to ice climb].
  - SCE – If the penstock is contributing to the formation of water/ice that is something we need to know about.
  - MLC – That was an old rumor that the SCE penstock or other infrastructure had contributed to ice buildup above Poole Power Plant. I'm not a climber, local climbers may know better.
  - USFS – It was real, people were posting this online and there was security, etc.
  - SCE – I didn't realize people were tampering with it and causing a problem.
- Comment: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California - Does the Inyo National Forest have any special use permits in the FERC boundary? I just want to know how the area is utilized by different groups to understand any impacts or future uses.

- Relicensing Team – At Saddlebag there is a resort, a marina, it's a Special Use Permit to a third party entity. Tioga Resort also has a Special Use Permit.
- USFS – Agreed, both are SUPs. There may also be temporary permits like researchers or outfitting and guiding, may not be in FERC boundary, and they are not permanent structures.
- Relicensing Team – All of the SUPs are non-project use.
- North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California - I can follow up with the USFS for more info.
- USFS – In the past, at Saddlebag there have been conflicts between the resort shuttle service and instream flows (keeping the lake level high enough), which ties into the Aquatics TWG. There are no lake level requirement on Saddlebag so the resort has issues sometimes with lower levels.
  - SCE – The current provisions are that the flows at Saddlebag are reviewed annually in April and August with USFS to be cognizant of the lake levels. There is extra attention given to it.
  - USFS – We have gotten on top of it recently. The SUP permittee was not very happy in the past.
- MLC – There is a trail that runs across Saddlebag dam. People do use that in the summer in good volume to access the wilderness area in 20-Lakes basin. There is great access now and it has improved in the last few years.
  - Relicensing Team – That is a formal USFS trail and it is a full loop around Saddlebag Lake. There is an official trailhead there with Inyo National Forest. The loop does go within the project boundary but is maintained by the USFS.

## 6. Schedule & Next Steps

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- The Relicensing Team reviewed the Study Plan request template and noted that it may be modified for this group because of the great discussion. We can fit these questions in to studies we have already been considering. Within a week, can you all give us your best shot of goals and objectives for studies? We are interested in how they tie into resource management plans. Rather than filling out the template, we can look at Bishop Creek's studies and see how they can be modified for Lee Vining. In conjunction with the notes we captured today, we can easily get to goals and objectives for proposed studies: recreation use and needs (identify facilities, roads pullouts, address creel questions) and a condition assessment (interest in accessibility and condition of facilities). In about a week can you get back to us?
  - MLC accepts the timeline but the USFS stated they wouldn't have the capability of filling out the template and request 2 weeks to get documents back to the Relicensing Team.
  - Relicensing Team – We are moving quickly on preparation for February TWG, so sooner the better and we are trying to get the meeting materials out in advance. We will take the info from you whenever it is ready.
- The Relicensing Team reviewed the upcoming TWGs timeline.

- Reminder that everyone can ask questions throughout, not only during the meetings. And we can do our best to give out notes to those that can't make meetings. We can also work on individual meetings with you, as needed.
- Matt Harper will reach out to folks if we have outstanding data needs.
- Finlay Anderson is to send out the memo of Bishop study plans.
- Draft meeting notes to be circulated for review
- Meeting invitations for February and March to be sent out
- Additional action items are underlined above

#### 7. Upcoming TWG Meetings

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Aquatics 2	February 22, 2021 10am
Terrestrial 2	February 24, 2021 10am
Cultural and Tribal 2	February 24, 2021 1:30pm
<b>Recreation and Land Use 2</b>	<b>February 25, 2021 10am</b>
Aquatics 3	March 29, 2021 10am
Terrestrial 3	March 31, 2021 10am
Cultural and Tribal 3	March 31, 2021 1:30pm
<b>Recreation and Land Use 3</b>	<b>April 1, 2021 10am</b>